

Exploring the Egyptian traditional cereal-based Kishk Sa'eedi (KS) by survey

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THE Egyptian indigenous cereal-based fermented food called Kishk Sa'eedi (KS) constitutes a major source of high quality dietary nutrients for more than half of the population of 85 million. Despite being part of the rich food heritage of Egypt, KS has received limited attention by researchers. It has, for the first time, been subjected to a full scientific investigation within the framework of the EC funded AFTER Project (African Food Tradition eVistited by Research). The survey focused on the indigenous processing methods, types and proportions of ingredients, sources of energy, shelf life and sensory properties.

Methodology

A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional design was used to survey representative KS producer's samples in nine villages in El Minia governorate in Upper Egypt. A semi-structured questionnaire was used. Data collection was undertaken from July to mid August 2011, yielding information from a total sample of 902 respondents.

Results

- KS is a home based production system mastered by rural families in Upper Egypt. The geographic region for traditional KS production extends from El-Fayoum governorate in the north up to Assuit in the south **figure 1**. The consumption of KS, however, is all over the country, especially in the setting where Upper Egyptian resides.

- The KS consists of two main ingredients namely: whole parboiled wheat and unpasteurized fermented buttermilk (*laban Zeer*). Little change in the utensils and other equipment used, many of which are modern reproductions of those found in the Egyptian museums, were observed.

- More than 90% of KS is produced during summer months May and June. The peak of KS production reported by (36.6%) of survey respondents is during July. This trend in the production is coincided with the harvest season of wheat. The percentage of households producing KS all the year round reported to be 3.4% **figure 2**.

- The KS consists of two main ingredients namely: whole parboiled wheat and unpasteurized fermented buttermilk (*laban Zeer*). Six major processing stags were reported by respondents and illustrated by reviewers as follows **figure 3**.

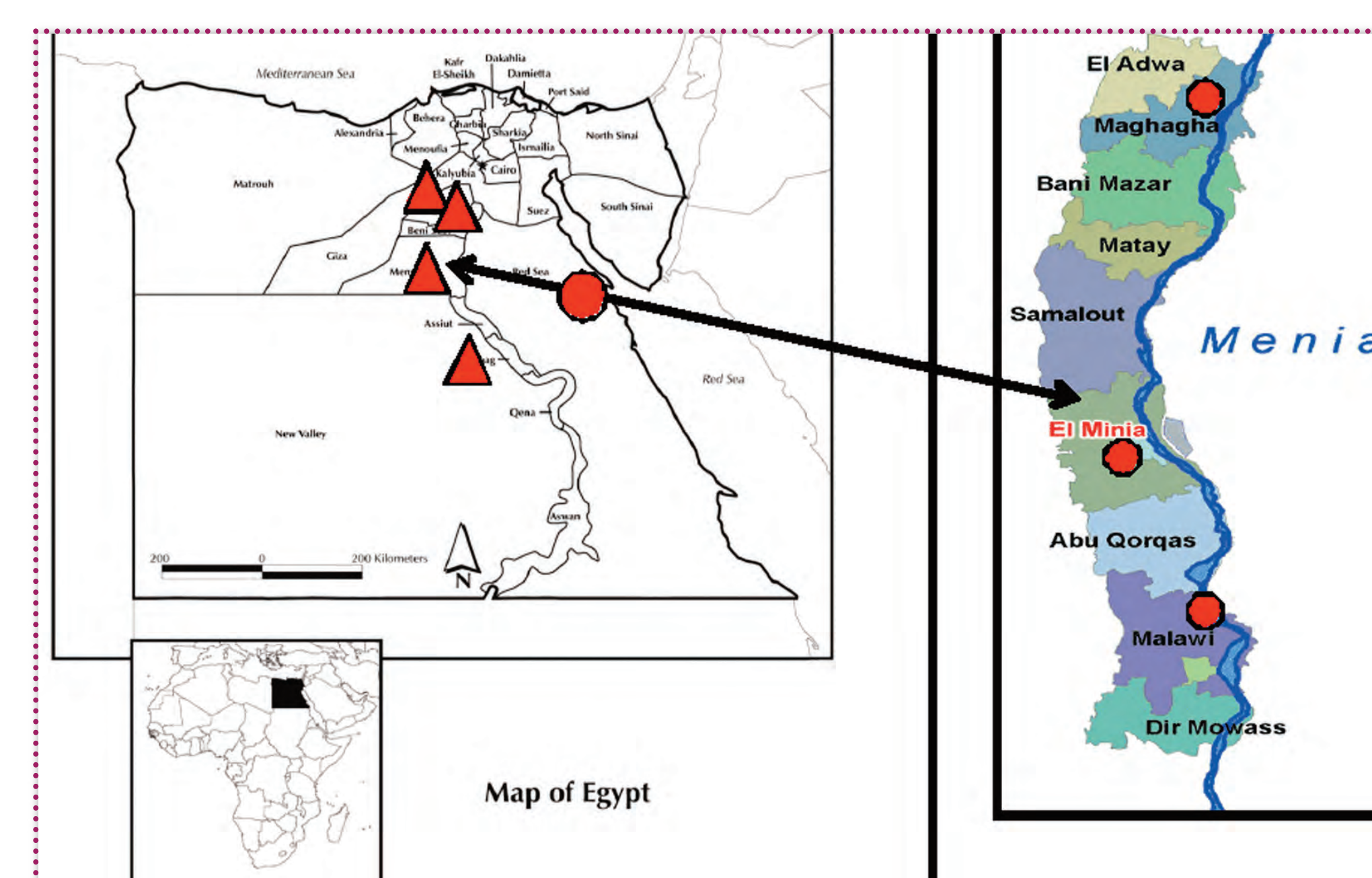


Figure 1. Kishk Sa'eedi KS main production area.

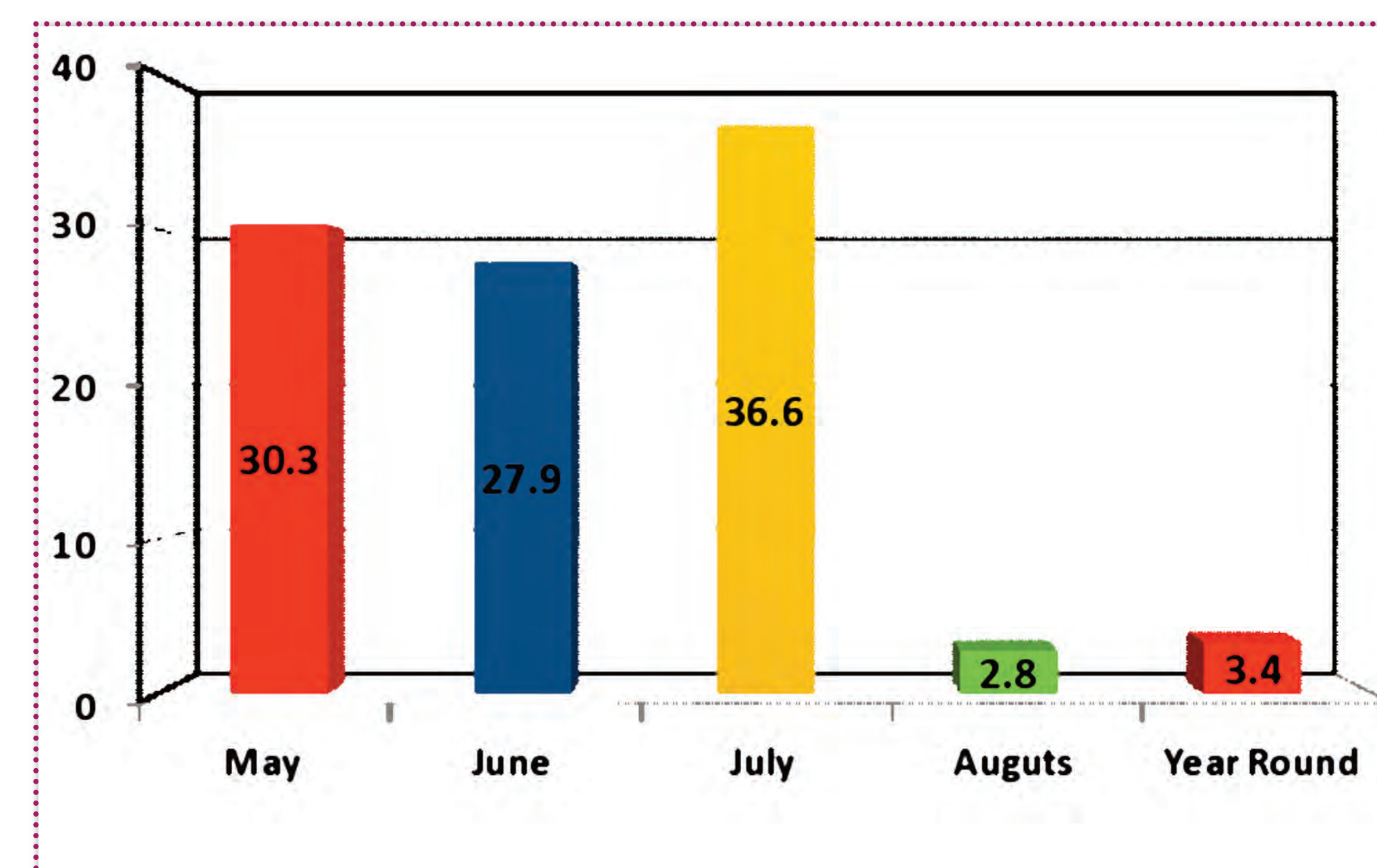


Figure 2. Variation percentage of KS production throughout the year.

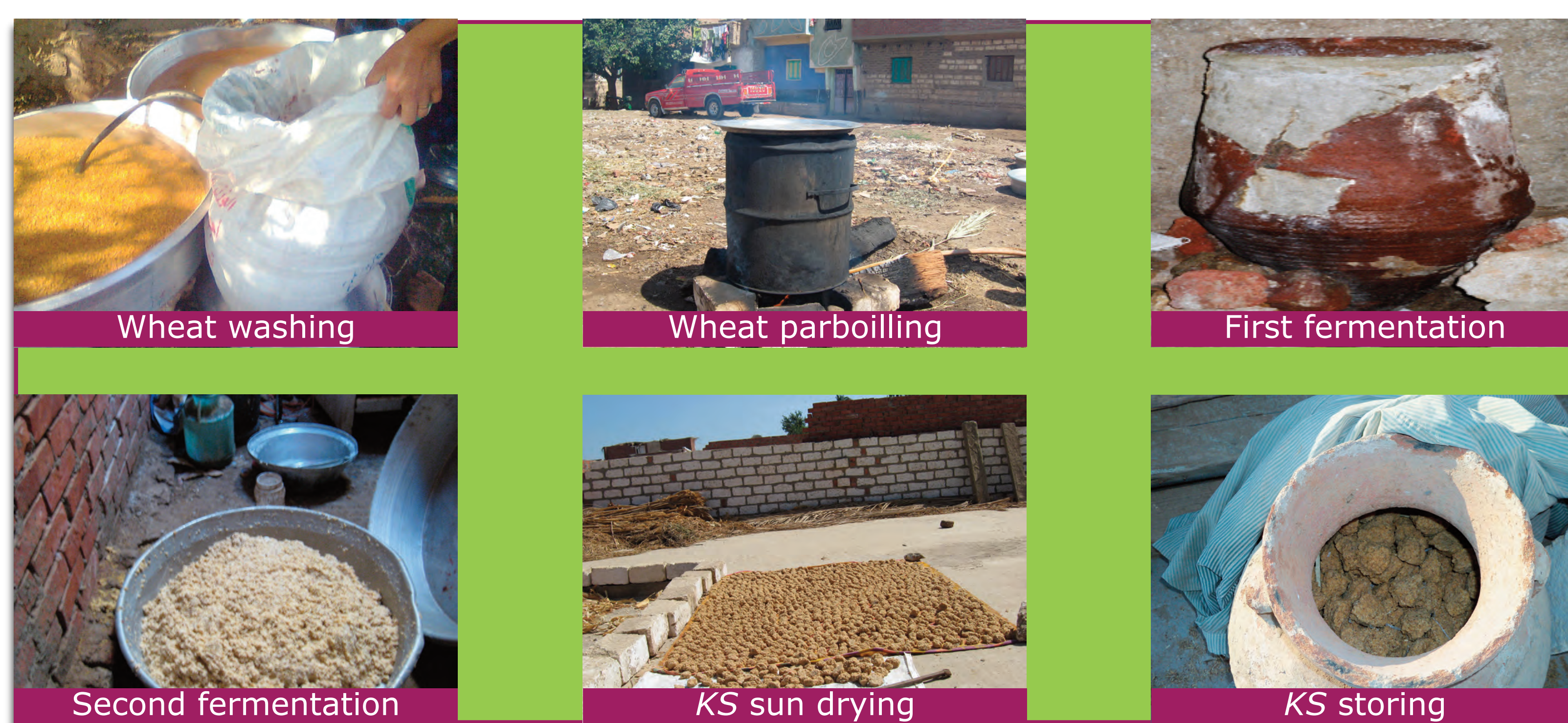


Figure 3. Production steps of KS.

- The KS production is for family and extended family consumption and for distribution as a gift to family, friends and relatives living outside the KS producing governorates. The product rarely reaches the markets in cities of the northern Delta region. It may be found in popular markets on Greater Cairo and the Giza neighbourhoods and is sold in the form of dried small balls or nuggets.

- In general participants reported that dried KS balls/nuggets are reconstituted by soaking in water and consumed as a hot gruel, often with the incorporation of vegetables, eggs, spices, garlic, or dates. The preparation way varied by districts however, the dominant preparation methods were used in soups and stews in Upper Egypt. It can be cooked with meat or poultry as a kishk Sa'eedi stew. For households with limited incomes, a few KS balls thrown in the cooking pot replace meat in the preparation of the daily vegetable stew. KS balls/nuggets are also munched in the dry state. Typical breakfast for millions of Egyptian is dipping few KS balls/nugget in the cub of tea with milk. KS can be served at any of the three main meals and between meals as well.

Conclusion

THIS analysis has provided a producers/consumers-driven novel knowledge, as well as insights about which innovations are compatible or not with the traditional product image. These findings have important implications for R&D, product positioning, marketing and innovation in traditional foods in Europe.

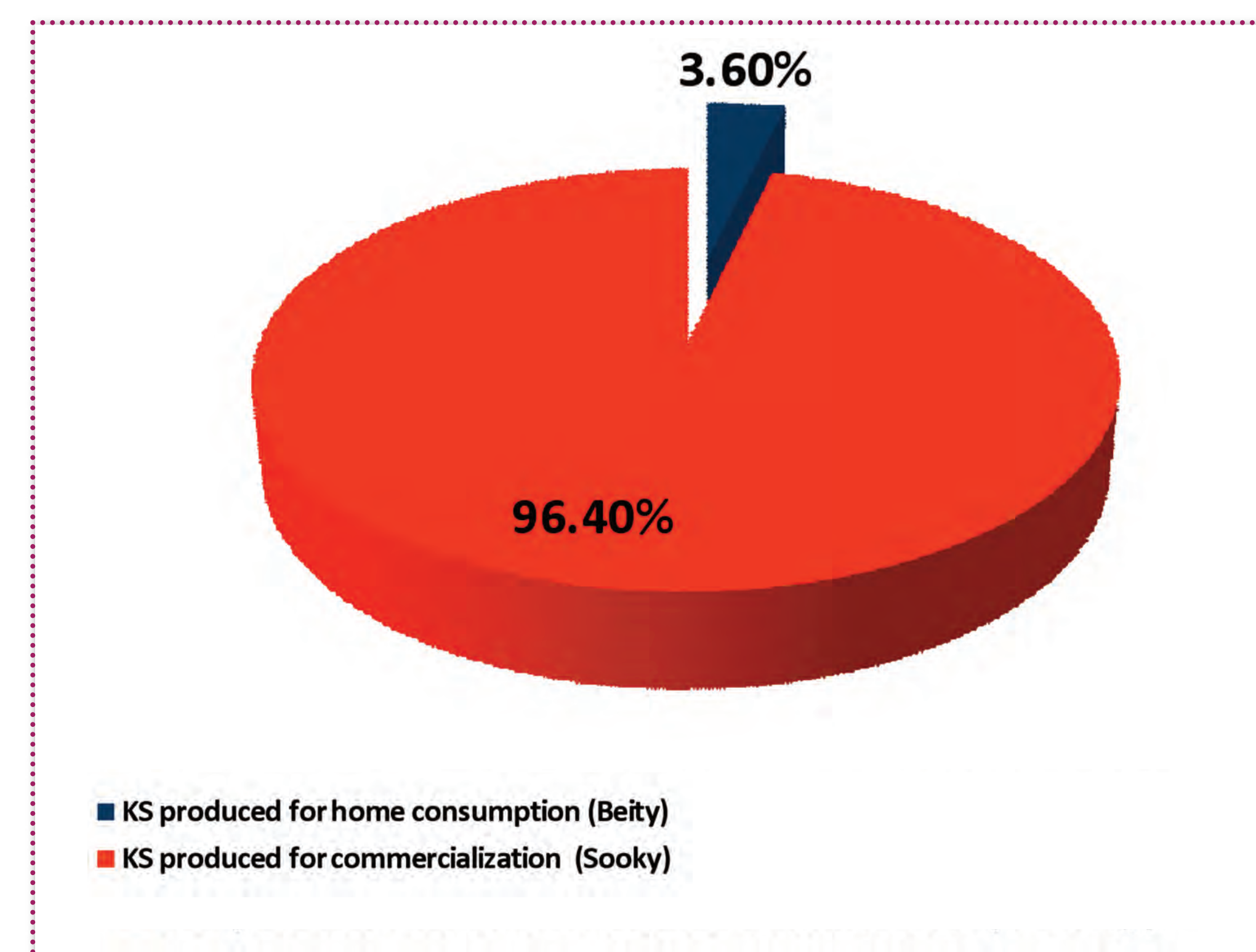


Figure 4. Type of KS sold in the market.